

Election, 2016

Every election is important but this election for our next President may be the most important election in our lifetime. Remember, it is not only the President who will occupy the White House but hundreds of additional officials who will be appointed by the next President, in addition to potentially 3 or 4 Supreme Court Justices. On Election Day, the voters will make critical decisions about the direction of our country for years to come. If you have not been paying close attention up to now, it is time to begin looking very carefully at the candidates who will be running. In order to make the right decisions when determining which candidates you will support, it is essential that you look carefully at their positions and their parties' platforms. This step in the process is critical if you are to fulfill your responsibilities as a faithful citizen. We all have a duty to participate in the political process with a fully informed—and well-formed—conscience.

OUR ROLE AS A CATHOLIC VOTER

Catholics have a moral obligation to promote the common good through the exercise of their voting privileges (cf. CCC 2240). It is not just civil authorities who have responsibility for a country. "Service of the common good require[s] citizens to fulfill their roles in the life of the political community" (CCC 2239). This means citizens should participate in the political process at the ballot box.

But voting cannot be arbitrary. "A well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual law that contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals" (CPL 4). A citizen's vote most often means voting for a candidate who will be the one directly voting on laws or programs. But being one step removed from law-making doesn't let citizens off the hook, since morality requires that we avoid doing evil to the greatest extent possible, even indirectly.

Some things are always wrong, and no one may deliberately vote in favor of them. Legislators, who have a direct vote, may not support these evils in legislation or programs. Citizens support these evils indirectly if they vote in favor of candidates who propose to advance them. Thus, to the greatest extent possible, Catholics must avoid voting for any candidate who intends to support programs or laws that are intrinsically evil. When all of the candidates endorse morally harmful policies, citizens must vote in a way that will limit the harm likely to be done.

FIVE NON-NEGOTIABLES

These five current issues concern actions that are intrinsically evil and must never be promoted by the law. Intrinsically evil actions are those that fundamentally conflict with the moral law and can never be deliberately performed under any circumstances. It is a serious sin to deliberately endorse or promote any of these actions, and no candidate who really wants to advance the common good will support any action contrary to the non-negotiable principles involved in these issues.

1. **Abortion** - The Church teaches that, regarding a law permitting abortions, it is "never licit to obey it, or to take part in a propaganda campaign in favor of such a law, or to vote for it" (EV 73). Abortion is the intentional and direct killing of an innocent human being, and therefore it is a form of homicide. The unborn child is always an innocent party, and no law may permit the taking of his life. Even when a child is conceived through rape or incest, the fault is not the child's, who should not suffer death for others' sins.
2. **Euthanasia** - Often disguised by the name "mercy killing," euthanasia is also a form of homicide. No person has a right to take his own life, and no one has the right to take the life of any innocent person. In euthanasia, the ill or elderly are killed, by action or omission, out of a misplaced sense of compassion, but true compassion cannot include intentionally doing something intrinsically evil to another person (cf. EV 73).
3. **Embryonic Stem Cell Research** - Human embryos are human beings. "Respect for the dignity of the human being excludes all experimental manipulation or exploitation of the human embryo" (CRF 4b). Recent scientific advances show that often medical treatments that researchers hope to develop from experimentation on embryonic stem cells can be developed by using adult stem cells instead. Adult stem cells can be obtained without doing harm to the adults from whom they come. Thus there is no valid medical argument in favor of using embryonic stem cells. And even if there were benefits to be had from such experiments, they would not justify destroying innocent embryonic humans.
4. **Human Cloning** - "Attempts . . . for obtaining a human being without any connection with sexuality through 'twin fission,' cloning, or parthenogenesis are to be considered contrary to the moral law, since they are in opposition to the dignity both of human procreation and of the conjugal union" (RHL I:6). Human cloning also involves abortion because the "rejected" or "unsuccessful" embryonic clones are destroyed, yet each clone is a human being.
5. **Homosexual "Marriage"** - True marriage is the union of one man and one woman. Legal recognition of any other union as "marriage" undermines true marriage, and legal recognition of homosexual unions actually does homosexual persons a disfavor by encouraging them to persist in what is an objectively immoral arrangement. "When legislation in favor of the recognition of homosexual unions is proposed for the first time in a legislative assembly, the Catholic lawmaker has a moral duty to express his opposition clearly and publicly and to vote against it. To vote in favor of a law so harmful to the common good is gravely immoral" (UHP 10). (Source: Priests for Life, www.priestsforlife.org)